

Principle #3

Incorporate a mix of uses to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services and social opportunities for all members of the community

Case Study

Downtown Exeter

Exeter's long history of manufacturing and commerce flourished on the banks of its tidal river. Today, Exeter Mills is a large residential development integrally connected to the downtown. Many of the historic buildings along Water Street have also changed uses over the years. The one constant is a mix of uses - shops, restaurants, and law and real estate firms line the street level, with residential and office uses in the upper levels.

The 2002 Master Plan heralds the downtown as "one of the Town's greatest assets. It creates and provides commercial, retail, and visitor services, adds to the tax base, is the Town center for social and civic interaction, and helps establish and reinforce the 'sense of place' of the Town." Its importance has been well recognized by the town government and its citizens, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, American Independence Museum and other organizations.



2002 COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the downtown is pedestrian-friendly by providing adequate sidewalks and pedestrian facilities;
- Design buildings and other structures at a human-scale;
- Provide alternatives to driving for people to access downtown (e.g., trolley);
- Maintain the historic character of downtown;
- Provide more green space and street trees throughout downtown, especially around the bandstand;
- Improve parking options;
- Encourage more night use of downtown; and
- Continue to develop the waterfront area, especially the area behind the Water Street buildings.

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The Exeter Town Hall was built in 1855. The lower level houses the District Court and Chamber of Commerce. The main hall is still used for meetings, voting, and civic and cultural events.

The Town Hall is located across the street from the Town Office building, which was originally built in 1892 for county offices.



The Bandstand, located at the intersection of Water and Front Streets, was a gift to the Town from Ambrose Swasey in 1916. The Exeter Brass Band, founded in 1847, still plays here on Monday nights in July.

The 2002 Master Plan recommendations support mixed residential, commercial, and office uses in the downtown, with specific allowance

for residential uses on upper floors of downtown buildings.

The Master Plan calls for review of parking, setback, building height, and other standards in the Waterfront Commercial district, to determine their adequacy to support, and not discourage, appropriate development density in the downtown.

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Water Street, Exeter's main thoroughfare, is lined with a variety of small shops and restaurants, popular with locals and tourists alike. The Waterfront Commercial zone

was amended to allow residential use in upper floors of downtown buildings. The upper levels of most buildings in the downtown are residential apartments and condominiums.



Swasey Parkway, located in the Waterfront Commercial District, follows the Squamscott River from downtown to Newfields Road.

Lined with trees and park benches, strollers can watch Phillips Exeter Academy's rowing teams practice, observe the many birds that fre-

quent the shallow tidal basin, or listen to a summer concert.

A boardwalk affords dramatic views of Exeter across the Squamscott River. The town landing is here also. In winter ice fishing houses cover the river.

Rehabilitation of the historic Exeter Mill structures adjacent to the downtown area, and design of new residential units at the quarter-mile long riverfront site presented extraordinary opportunities and challenges. The buildings presented generous floor areas, ceiling heights, and windows; richly weathered brick, massive wood

beams; and decking. The challenge was to humanize the scale of the entire complex, and turn a long neglected stretch of industrial waterfront into a residential district closely linked to downtown Exeter. The National Park Service awarded the project full approval for Historic Certification.



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Principle #3 Examples

(1) The Beaver Mills Project, Keene

The Beaver Mills property on Railroad Street was vacant, in desperate need of repairs, and assessed for tax purposes at only \$450,000. The project began in 1997 when the vacant 60,000 square foot building was offered for sale, with a plan to provide affordable housing and commer-

cial space - while renovating a derelict building in the downtown. Beaver Mills was developed by the non-profit Keene Eastside Development Corporation - a partnership of Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and Southwestern Community Services, Inc.



(2) The Beaver Mills Project, Keene

Funding for the over \$7 million project came from more than 11 sources. This complex project involved regulatory issues associated with creating residential and commercial condominiums in the same building, tax credits, and listing the Mill on the National

Historic Register. Architect Paul Mirski of Enfield and builder Ingram Construction of Swanzeey worked closely with City Planning Director Rhett Lamb and Planning Board Chair David Bacon.

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(3) The Beaver Mills Project, Keene

Completed in 2000, the Beaver Mills project is now assessed at \$2,425,000 and contributes about \$80,000 to the city in property taxes each year housing:

- 40 elderly housing units
- Monadnock Developmental Services
- Keene Montessori School
- Cheshire Medical Center / Dartmouth - Hitchcock Audiology Department
- Children's Dental Care
- LifePlus
- Ken's Refrigeration



Cocheco Falls Millworks, Dover

The Cocheco Falls Millworks building has been the center of downtown Dover's business district for generations. Today the Mill building houses several technology businesses and a

museum of the history of the Mill. Cocheco Falls Millworks Courtyard is on the Cocheco River, off Central Avenue directly across from First Street.

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Dow Academy, Franconia Office / Residential Reuse of Old School

The future of this former school in the heart of Franconia village (I-93 Exit 38) was uncertain when it was no longer needed for educational purposes. The main building and several outbuildings were converted to a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Condominiums fill the main school building, with office space in the lower levels and an outbuilding. This housing, adjacent to a town park and a short walk from the village center, has proven valuable in increasing activity in the village center.



Littleton Downtown Commercial / Residential Mix

Chutters, at 43 Main Street in Littleton, combines traditional and innovative mixed uses in a downtown commercial building. Carol and Mike Hamilton began the systematic renovation and conversion of the vacant drug store in 1996. On the first floor they developed a thriving retail store boasting the 'World's Longest Candy Counter,' an anchor of Main Street, and rented the two upper floors as two large apartments.

Finding it difficult to manage both their growing retail store and internet businesses, the owners formed a partnership with the Hugh J. Gallen Vocational Center. They renovated the lower level, previously used for storage, as a classroom for the Vocational Center's marketing class, which was squeezed for space at school. In their Chutters classroom, students now get both the standard marketing curriculum and hands-on experience running an e-commerce business.

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Ammonoosuc Green, Littleton

For this neighborhood improvement project between Main Street and the Ammonoosuc River, eight residential and commercial buildings - including an empty, condemned 17-unit residential and commercial structure on Main Street - were replaced with a mix of new apartments, commercial and office space, public parking, green space, and a single-family home. A common green space at the center of the revitalized neighborhood will link Main Street to Littleton's new Riverwalk.

A housing non-profit, AHEAD Inc. led a coalition of approximately 20 funders that participated in this \$4 million project. Neighborhood residents, Littleton Main Street, and the Town participated extensively in the project design. Challenges included contaminated soils and higher than anticipated expenses. Recognizing that mixed-use development and housing are key to downtown revitalization, AHEAD waived most of its \$300,000 developer fee.



Seven Lebanon Street, Hanover

The Town of Hanover and Dartmouth College cooperated to redevelop Seven Lebanon Street in Hanover, formerly a surface parking lot and small drive-through bank. The parcels

were joined to build a 289-space parking garage and a three-story retail and office building, adding 45,000 square feet of commercial space.